



## Israel steals 16 percent of Gaza's territory for 'buffer zone'

### Description

**ISRAEL/GAZA : Israeli forces are destroying farmland and demolishing hundreds of homes as well as schools in Gaza to create an 800-meter buffer zone alongside the border with Israel, The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reported on 16 March.**

Palestinians would be barred from the zone, which Israeli officials claim is needed to allow Israelis to return to settlements surrounding Gaza, which were evacuated after the Hamas-led Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on 7 October.

Some 1,200 Israeli soldiers and civilians were killed during the Hamas attack, including many by Israeli forces themselves using helicopters, drones, and tanks. Israeli forces wished to prevent Hamas from taking captives back to Gaza.

The WSJ adds that plans for creating the buffer zone began in the first days of the war and would allow Israeli troops to see and stop anyone approaching the border.

Before 7 October, Israeli forces had already maintained a 350-meter buffer zone and often opened fire at Palestinians entering it to approach the border fence. Only farmers were allowed to enter the zone.

During protests in 2018, known as the "Great Return March," Israeli snipers killed 214 Palestinians near the border fence.

The Israeli military declined to comment on the expanded buffer zone.

Shaul Arieli, a former Israeli colonel, said the creation of a permanent buffer zone inside Gaza would be illegal under international law because Israel would be occupying land beyond its recognized territory.

If the buffer zone is completed, Israel would effectively confiscate 16 percent of Gaza's territory, according to geography professor Adi Ben Nun of Hebrew University.

Using bulldozers and controlled explosions, Israel has destroyed some 1,100 buildings, more than 40

percent of the estimated 2,800 in the proposed zone, Ben Nun says.

Israel is also creating a 320-meter-wide road that will effectively cut the Gaza Strip in two, dividing the north from the south. Israel forces have so far destroyed 150 buildings to build the road, Ben Nun added.

Israeli officials say the army will use the road to patrol Gaza until Israeli military operations are complete, which could last months or years.

Religious settlers in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition have made clear their goal of conquering Gaza, forcibly expelling its 2.3 million Palestinian inhabitants, and establishing settlements for Jewish Israelis to live in their place.

The White House claims to oppose the buffer zone and has warned against any proposal that threatens the territorial integrity of the 225-kilometer-square enclave.

However, President Biden has taken no action to pressure Israel to end policies it publicly opposes, such as the killing of huge numbers of Palestinian civilians and blocking humanitarian aid to Gaza, which is creating a famine.

Israeli forces have killed over 30,000 Palestinians, the majority women and children, in Gaza since 7 October.

The White House has continued to send weapons to Israel. despite these killings. The Washington Post reported on 6 March that the US has approved and delivered more than 100 separate foreign military sales to Israel since the start of the war on 7 October. This includes thousands of precision-guided munitions, small-diameter bombs, bunker busters, small arms, and other lethal aid.

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